IN THE CLAIMS

The following is a complete list of the claims now pending; this listing replaces all earlier versions and listings of the claims.

Claim 1 (previously presented): A color-image processing apparatus comprising:

reading means for reading color image data stored in image storage means provided in said color-image processing apparatus; and

determination means for determining the similarity between the color image data and a pattern of a specific image,

wherein said determination means determines the similarity between the pattern of the specific image and the color image data that is read at a predetermined time independent of a read instruction given by a user to read the color image data stored in the image storage means.

Claim 2 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said color-image processing apparatus comprises a computer, and wherein said storage means comprises a hard disk.

Claim 3 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the color-image data is stored in said image storage means as a file.

Claim 4 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising alteration means for performing alteration of the color-image data when said determination means determines that the color-image data coincides with the pattern.

Claim 5 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said image storage means and said determination means are controlled by an operating system on a computer, and wherein the operating system periodically controls said determination means to perform determination on the color-image data stored in said image storage means.

Claim 6 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means adds determination-completed flag information to each piece of the color image data that has been subjected to determination.

Claim 7 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said determination means does not determine the similarity with respect to the color image data having determination-completed flag information.

Claim 8 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said determination means determines the similarity when application software executed on a computer reads the color image data from said storage image means.

Claim 9 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination when an operation input from an operator is not provided for a predetermined period.

Claim 10 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination when a CPU (central processing unit) of said color-image processing apparatus does not execute application software.

Claim 11 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination when said color-image processing apparatus is turned on.

Claim 12 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination when copying the color-image data from an external storage device to said image storage means.

Claim 13 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination when copying the color-image data from said image storage means to an external storage device.

Claim 14 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said determination means performs a determination during communication of the color-image data with an external apparatus connected to said color-image processing apparatus via a network.

Claim 15 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said determination means performs a determination by obtaining bit-map data other than data buried within the image file in a format of a tag.

Claim 16 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 9, wherein, when another operation input from the operator is not provided for a predetermined period after starting an operation input from the operator, said determination means resumes determination processing for the color-image data for which a determination by said determination means has not been performed.

Claim 17 (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 10, wherein, when the CPU of said color-image processing apparatus does not execute the application software after starting execution of the application software, said determination means resumes determination processing for the color-image data for which a determination by said determination means has not been performed.

Claim 18 (currently amended): A control method for [[for]] controlling a ~~color~~ color-image processing apparatus, said method comprising the steps of:

reading color image data stored in an image storage medium provided in the color-image processing apparatus; and

determining the similarity between the color image data and a pattern of a specific image,

wherein determining the similarity between the pattern of the specific image and color image data that is read at a predetermined time independent of a read instruction given by the user to read the color image data stored in the image storage medium.

Claim 19 (previously presented): A control method according to claim 18, wherein the color-image processing apparatus comprises a computer.

Claim 20 (previously presented): A computer program comprising:

code for reading color image data stored in an image storage medium provided in a color-image processing apparatus; and

code for determining the similarity between an image subjected to determination and a pattern of a specific image,

wherein determining the similarity between the pattern of the specific image and color image data that is read at a predetermined time independent of a

read instruction given by a user to read the color image data stored in the image storage medium.

Claim 21 (previously presented): A storage medium according to claim 20, wherein the image storage means comprises a hard disk.